

17. SPEECH OF NAI PRIDI BANOMYONG

in the Assembly on 7 May 1946

Mr Chairman,

On the occasion that the Assembly session comes to an end today in accordance with the 1932 constitution, may I take this occasion to invite all the members of the Assembly to recall the grace of King Prajadhipok who granted the constitution in 1932 after the change in government. Before the grant of the constitution, the king had a wish which became known to the People's Party only six days after the change in government, that is on 30 June. Phraya Phahon Phonpayuhasena, Phraya Prichachonlayut, Phraya Manopakon Nitithada, Phraya Siwisanwacha, and myself were summoned to attend in audience on the king. Chaophraya Mahithon, who was the royal secretary, took down the record. The king said that he had wished to grant a constitution, but when he consulted high-ranking officials of the time, they disagreed. Finally when he returned from a visit to America he asked someone who attended in audience on that day to consider the issue. That person offered his opinion that it was not yet time, and the advisors agreed. The People's Party had no foreknowledge of the royal wish and performed the change honestly, not to steal a march on someone as certain people have pretended, twisting the truth. The complete truth appears in the record of the meeting on that day. The fact is that King Prajadhipok had a prior wish but there were people who advised against it. Hence when the People's Party asked the king to grant a constitution, the king was pleased to make this gracious gift to the Thai people. I would like all present and the Thai people as a whole to remember the king's graciousness and to have high esteem for His Majesty at all times.

At this point, those who promoted the grant of a constitution, and those who joined to help as type-2 members, have come to the end of their term as members. I feel it is necessary to re-establish an understanding of the democratic principles in accordance with the constitution which the People's Party requested King Prajadhipok to grant. By the constitutional system, we

mean democracy with the rule of law, morality, and honesty, not that sort of democracy which has no rules and no morality, and which uses the right to freedom to generate disorder, the breakdown of peace, and moral decline. That system is called anarchy, not democracy. Take care. Do not confuse democracy with anarchy. Anarchy is a major danger to society and nation. To be secure, the democratic system must comprise law, morality, and honesty—or what in the old days was called government through unity. Rights without the limitations of law and morality, or rights without honesty—these are not the principles of democracy, not the principles for which the People's Party requested the grant of a constitution and for which King Prajadhipok granted the constitution to the Thai people. The king did not wish for anarchy. Let me take the example of Italy. Before the time of Mussolini, Italy's democracy had no rules. It was chaotic. This created the cause—or allowed the fascists to claim as cause—for the establishment of dictatorship in Italy. I do not wish to see dictatorship in Siam. Thus it is necessary to prevent or oppose anarchy, which provides a way for dictators to assert themselves. I believe that if we help one another to uphold the democratic system according to law and order as I have stated already, dictatorship cannot arise. I am one of those who joined with friends in the People's Party to request the granting of a constitution. I have always supported the democratic system according to the constitution, even in opposing Japan. That opposition might have made it necessary to form a provisional government. But I chose the route of setting up a government in accordance with the current constitutional system. I have no reason to become an enemy of democracy. I notice that there are people who misunderstand the democratic system and introduce anarchy in its place, which is a serious danger to the nation. I have no wish to make anyone believe me without opposition. I want opposition, but opposition which is honest, which does not raise up lies as truth. Telling lies or falsehoods is wrong. In politics, rights under a democratic system must be used with a pure heart, in the pursuit of the true common benefit, not personal benefit, or the jealousy which has its origin in egoism. Then unity or true democracy is possible. Anyone who has idealism with honesty—I have respect for that person. We can work together. I believe that if each party honestly pursues the common benefit of the nation, not personal benefit, even if each takes a different route to their objective, we will meet one another in the end. Let me refer to many royal family members (*chao nai*). In the past, they went in one direction and I went in another direction. But many of these old royal family members aim for the common benefit of the nation not for themselves. In the end we can team up to work together well in the service of the nation, and love one another more closely than someone who uses the nation as a cover but really pursues personal interest. Some people are

jealous when they do not get what they hoped for. They destroy activities which are of benefit for the country, instead of being constructive for the benefit of the country as a whole. Some are hostile to the People's Party out of an ideal of being honest to the person of the king. I respect that honesty. There are many examples of such honest people who joined together with me in activities in the service of the nation. These people have no reason for concern. But there are those who give an external appearance of loyalty to the king, but internally have a personal objective or benefits to be obtained. Their dissatisfaction is personal, hence I fear that these people may turn whichever way gives them the greater personal gain.

I hope that all of you members of the Assembly will use your rights with a pure heart and hold to the principles of law, morality, and honesty. Do not support the advent of anarchy. Let me entrust all you members of the Assembly with my thoughts on the future of the nation. I desire to see the nation free of dictatorship and free of anarchy, with only democracy complete with unity. Democracy with unity is the objective of the People's Party which requested the grant of the constitution. It was also the wish of King Prajadhipok who granted the constitution.

May I thank the members of the Assembly for their cooperation and good assistance to the government. May I wish that you all meet with happiness and joy. Finally may I invite all of you to wish success for democracy with unity, in accordance with the constitution, to continue in Siam for ever.